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ABSTRACT

In 1987, Walhalla High School in Walhalla, South Carolina, undertook a major restructuring effort to raise the school's standards and keep pace with the expectations of local high-tech businesses and industry. School and district leaders established an affiliation with the Southern Regional Education Board's High Schools That Work initiative, which was aimed at raising the achievement of career-bound high school students. Walhalla raised its standards by eliminating general and remedial courses and requiring all students to complete an upgraded academic core of mathematics, science, and English courses. Students were required to plan their course selections around five career concentrations. The following were among the strategies used by Walhalla's administrators and teachers to improve the services provided to students and students' performance: (1) actively involving the faculty; (2) providing staff development; (3) supporting teachers in using new instructional methods; (4) involving parents and the community; (5) using the Gold Seal achievement program to get students to meet higher standards; (6) providing positive academic counseling for students; (7) working closely with the area career center; (8) connecting rigorous academic concepts to their applications in the workplace; (9) instituting block scheduling; and (10) using data for school improvement.

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Walhalla's restructuring efforts have resulted in improvements in student attendance, motivation, and academic performance. (MN)

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Case Study

WALHALLA HIGH SCHOOL
Walhalla, S.C.

Raising Standards and Making Steady Improvement to Keep Pace with the Expectations of High-Tech Business and Industry

Located in Oconee County, S.C., Walhalla High School enrolls 830 students in grades 9 through 12. Once primarily agricultural, the community is emerging as a high-tech manufacturing area. The change is due in part to a nuclear power plant that was built in the county 25 years ago, bringing an inexpensive power source for industry as well as recreational lakes for tourists and residents. Tri-County Technical College and Clemson University, located nearby, are magnets for business. In such an environment, the county's unemployment rate averages less than 5 percent.

Walhalla High School students come from blue-collar and middle-management families in the low to middle socioeconomic range. Fifteen percent of students are eligible for free and reduced lunch plans. The ratio of teachers to pupils is 22 to 1.

RESTRUCTURING THE HIGH SCHOOL

The restructuring efforts at Walhalla High School have occurred under the leadership of John Hostetler, a former science teacher and coach who has been principal for 19 years. The South Carolina Department of Education recognized Hostetler's achievements by selecting him as Tech Prep Principal of the Year in 1996.

Twelve years ago, Hostetler was invited to serve on a needs assessment committee of the Oconee County Business and Education Partnership. In talking with employers, the committee found a critical mismatch between the preparation of local young people and the skills needed for decent jobs in business and industry. Employers lamented that local high school graduates entering the job market lacked:

- mathematics and science skills for diagnosing and solving problems;
- computer literacy;
- career guidance and advisement, beginning in middle school;
- education and experience in a career pathway;
- adequate awareness of career opportunities; and
- proper understanding of the skills and training needed for good jobs.

The committee also identified a need for the high school and the community to work together to address the deficiencies. A meeting of business and education leaders and lawmakers resulted in a business and education panel aimed at sharing information and devising ways to keep students in school, connect work and education, and give students a focus for learning.

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One outgrowth of the effort was a grant from the governor to employ a career specialist for Walhalla High School and Walhalla Middle School. This support enabled the two schools to develop a comprehensive career guidance system. When the grant expired, the business and industry leaders who had helped the school conduct the needs assessment stepped forward to provide funding for the career specialist position.

AFFILIATION WITH *HIGH SCHOOLS THAT WORK*

In 1987 the Oconee County School District accepted an invitation to join the Southern Regional Education Board's new initiative aimed at raising the achievement of career-bound high school students. As a result, Walhalla High School and Hamilton Career Center became one of SREB's 26 pilot sites located in 13 states. The schools agreed to implement 10 key practices, including one that calls for replacing the general track. Membership in SREB's *High Schools That Work* initiative has given the school access to data, staff development conferences and workshops, technical assistance, and publications as decisions were made and new approaches were implemented over time.

"We wouldn't have focused as soon on eliminating the general track if it had not been for *High Schools That Work*," Hostetler said. "Our participation made it happen much more quickly."

RAISING STANDARDS

Walhalla High School raised standards by eliminating general and remedial courses and requiring all students to complete a challenging program of study. Understandably, the school encountered some initial opposition from students and parents who were "comfortable" with the old curriculum. These students liked knowing what to expect in low-level courses; their parents viewed remedial courses as a way to "bring skills up to par." By introducing new instructional methods, a new class schedule and an extra-help system, the school has overcome objections to an upgraded curriculum.

Higher standards call for academic assistance to help students achieve at a higher level. In Walhalla's extra-help system, students who fail to meet minimum standards follow an Individual Academic Plan (IAP), which may include required assignments in the academic skills lab, tutoring in academic subjects, and parent conferences, all of which are monitored by an assistant principal. Through the school network, each computer is equipped with SkillsBank, a self-help program that includes more than 500 activities covering core concepts in reading, language, mathematics, writing and information skills. During daily Razorback Activity Hour, students pursue required remedial activities, find information on the Internet, or listen to guest speakers.

Today, Walhalla students take more demanding courses, complete more credits and maintain consistent results on standardized tests. They focus on career goals as they complete high school programs of study. Placement and follow-up data from colleges and employers reveal that Walhalla High School graduates are on the "right road."

Janet Smalley, the school's curriculum coordinator, summed it up this way: "Setting higher standards and providing extra help are key ingredients in school improvement."

CHANGES IN CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

All Walhalla students are expected to complete an upgraded academic core of mathematics, science and English courses. In 1992-93, only 41 percent of students completed three mathematics courses, including two at an advanced level; that number had climbed to 100 percent in the 1995-96 school year. In 1992-93 only four percent of students completed four or more mathematics credits; by 1997-98, that number had increased dramatically to 86 percent. In 1992-93, the percentage of students taking three or more science courses, including two high-level courses, was 46 percent; that number had risen to 90 percent by 1997-98.

Progress in Teaching All Students an Upgraded Academic Core

	1992-93	1995-96	1997-98
3 mathematics credits (2 advanced)	41%	100%	100%
4 or more mathematics credits	4%	82%	86%
3 or more science credits (2 advanced)	46%	88%	90%

Students plan their course selections around five career concentrations: Arts, Media and Communication; Business and Marketing; Education, Health and Human Services; Engineering and Industrial Technology; and Environmental and Agricultural Systems. When Walhalla joined *High Schools That Work,* only 29 percent of students completed a career or academic concentration. In the class of 1998, 77 percent of students did so. In other words, the percentage of students who did not complete a concentration declined from 71 percent in 1987-88 to 23 percent in 1997-98. Walhalla's goal is to get all students to complete a concentration.

Walhalla Seniors Completing a Career Concentration

	1987-88	1995-96	1997-98
Completed a career or academic concentration	29%	74%	77%
Did not complete a concentration	71%	26%	23%

When Walhalla High School joined *High Schools That Work,* 25 general-level academic courses crowded the curriculum. Such courses do not exist anymore. In 1987-88, WHS offered 14 non-credit remedial courses; by 1995-96, that number had been reduced to four, all of which are required by the South Carolina Department of Education to assist students with skills identified as deficient on the state exit exam.

STRATEGIES IN MAKING MAJOR CHANGES

Administrators and teachers at Walhalla High School found that teamwork and perseverance paid off in overcoming obstacles as the school underwent major curriculum and instructional changes. The strategies used over a period of years in raising standards include:

Actively Involving the Faculty

One important administrative action was to involve teachers in making decisions that affect students. The school explored site-based management in 1989 and took some steps in that direction. However, that approach neither fit the leadership style of the administration nor provided the leadership sought by the faculty. Through open discussions in instructional planning committee meetings, participatory management emerged as a more desirable and effective leadership style. The team structure was called into play, resulting in a Curriculum Development Team and three other teams. This structure motivated more teachers to play a larger role in school improvement. Now, only two teams — Curriculum Development and Staff Development — are needed.

- The Curriculum Development Team, appointed by the administration, is composed of departmental heads, the curriculum coordinator, the guidance director, the school-to-work coordinator and the principal. This group meets at least monthly. It screens new directives from the federal, state and district levels and executes long-range planning to accomplish such directives and to achieve local goals. Committee members also devoted many hours to re-aligning the curriculum when general and low-level courses were eliminated.

- The Staff Development Team plans professional inservice activities. Members design and administer a survey to gain teacher input on staff development needs. They review current legislation such as South Carolina's School to Work Act to ensure that the school is adhering to state mandates, district long-range plans and the school's renewal plan. After reviewing teacher survey results, the team sets priorities and prepares a calendar of events and a budget. When the staff development package is approved by the administration, the team selects topics, speakers, sites and other elements needed to make the plan a success. Team members believe that raising student achievement begins with raising teacher performance.

When school improvement got under way, department heads met with teachers to share the school's new direction: elimination of general and remedial courses. The process began with mathematics and spread gradually to science, English and social studies. As expected, failure rates increased at first but leveled off in less than three semesters. When a flood of students wanted to change their schedules to get rid of the tougher courses, counselors told them, "There are no more low-level courses. You will just have to stick with it."

Providing Staff Development

Walhalla High School is committed to professional growth. In addition to attending *High Schools That Work* conferences and workshops, teachers visit work sites to gain greater understanding of why students need more challenging content. Since 1995-96, teachers have been required to visit local business and industry as a way to better integrate workplace skills into the curriculum. Monthly visits have been made to companies such as Torrington, Schlumberger, Square D and Compact Air Products — high-tech plants that produce products ranging from electric meters to customized ball bearings. To follow up, teachers write lesson plans designed to strengthen students' academic, technical and personal skills. The school's career specialist places the lesson plans in a notebook that all teachers can use.

In another aspect of staff development, teachers participate in a graduate-level industry education course offered by the school district in cooperation with Clemson University. The course includes business tours as well as seminars conducted by industry personnel ranging from human resources managers to the owners themselves. It culminates in a teacher-designed project intended to inject new knowledge into the classroom. An assistant principal who took the course applied what she learned about teamwork to the matter of school discipline: Students with poor interpersonal skills are taught to be tolerant of others and to recognize that the school is a community where individual differences are respected as everyone works together to accomplish group goals.

Supporting Teachers in Using New Instructional Methods

Staff development enables teachers to learn new ways to teach complex mathematics, science and English concepts by connecting what students learn to real life. By using applied instructional methods, teachers motivate students whose previous classroom experiences held little meaning.

A biology instructor served a summer internship at Amoco Fabrics and Fibers. After working in every production job at the facility, she defined the mathematics, computer and communication skills needed to perform competently in each job. She returned to the classroom convinced that students need more computer, mathematics, and technical reading and writing skills. To strengthen these skills, she required each student to select a science topic, do research and use a computer to produce a project. The approach was such a success that the science department now requires all students to complete computer-generated projects.

In 1996 a group of faculty members collaborated on a project that received a teacher incentive grant from the South Carolina Department of Education. The project — senior portfolios representing students' academic and career achievement — was implemented in the 1996-97 school year. Students taking Communications for the Workplace develop a plan for presenting themselves as a "total person." They submit the plan to the teacher for approval and suggestions and begin to gather examples of career-related projects that they can complete at school and/or in the community. Portfolio items are prepared on a personal computer and placed in a looseleaf binder. One student majoring in fashion design and merchandising filled her portfolio with sketches and photos of clothing she designed and made. Portfolios are assessed on the basis of stated criteria; students must successfully complete a portfolio to pass the course.

Involving Parents and the Community

A school improvement council composed of teachers, students, parents and business leaders helps school administrators make decisions concerning curriculum, technology, facilities and discipline. The group tackles tough issues such as revamping and restructuring the curriculum. It also selected the school's five career concentrations.

The council is elected by faculty, students and parents. Nominees for student representatives are solicited from the student population, and a nomination form for parent representation is included in a newsletter sent to students' homes. Council members serve two-year terms.

In communicating with parents and the community, school leaders mounted a campaign to explain the tougher school and classroom standards and to involve parents in helping their children succeed in high school studies. Activities to involve parents include:

- a speakers bureau of faculty members to make presentations to community organizations;
- a monthly newsletters mailed to students' families;
- articles in the local newspaper;
- radio announcements;
- an annual career education forum to inform students and parents of job opportunities and job skills required by local business and industry;
- school bulletin board announcements promoting high expectations for all students;
- an annual report describing the success of new school programs; and
- individual parent conferences scheduled annually with faculty advisors.

Structuring the Education Program Around Career Concentrations

The school's five career concentrations allow students to select either tech prep, which leads to an associate degree, or college prep, which leads to a baccalaureate degree. The plan provides flexibility for students to move from one concentration to another if their needs or interests change.

Career Bound, a planning booklet for students and parents, contains course-selection information. Students and their parents know exactly what is required at each grade level for completion of a particular concentration. The booklet also lists related electives, the types of associate and baccalaureate degrees available at the postsecondary level, and the careers associated with each concentration. This information makes the connection between courseware and life's work and emphasizes that education for any career extends beyond high school.

Career concentrations are the focus of students' planned programs of study and career portfolios, which are reviewed by parents at least annually and by students and counselors more frequently. Each student's computer profile shows his or her career concentration and work-based learning experiences.

Using the Gold Seal Achievement Program to Get Students to Meet Higher Standards

The Gold Seal achievement program is the cornerstone of efforts to raise expectations at Walhalla High School. The program motivates students to achieve at a higher level and provides a focus for course selection and completion.

A Gold Seal signifies that a student has completed a career concentration and earned 25 to 30 credits — more than the 24 credits required for high school graduation in South Carolina. Students at Walhalla High School can earn up to 32 credits — and many do so. Students qualifying for a Gold Seal are honored on Awards Day and receive a Gold Seal certificate and a special seal on their transcript. The two students earning the highest grade point average in each career area are recognized as Gold Seal Scholars.

The Gold Seal program has been very effective in raising student achievement. In just two years, from 1994 to 1996, the percentage of students earning Gold Seal status almost doubled. In 1998, 77 percent of Walhalla seniors earned a Gold Seal.

One 12th-grader told how the Gold Seal program affected her life: "The business cluster caused me to take more courses and work harder on my high school studies. It made me plan for the future. As a result, I've decided to study business administration after I graduate."

Providing Positive Academic Counseling for Students (PACS)

Walhalla High Schools' first teacher advisement program was piloted during the 1996-97 school year. A committee of teachers, guidance counselors and administrators researched successful advisement programs to develop a program that provides all students with adult mentors throughout their high school years. Every other week, PACS groups meet to discuss topics recommended by an advisory committee. The role of a teacher-advisor is to facilitate a trusting relationship with students and parents through individual and small-group discussions as well as parent conferences held during the year. Through parent conferences, an advisor becomes a liaison between school and home. The goals of the program are to advise students regarding plans for the future and to monitor academic progress. The program contributes to a positive and caring school environment.

Working Closely with the Area Career Center

Walhalla works closely with Hamilton Career Center and its director, Frank Lanford, to help students complete career courses. Enrollment by Walhalla High School students in the area center has more than doubled since 1992-93, when 107 students attended classes there. For the 1997-98 school year, 277 students — one-third of all Walhalla High School students — enrolled at the center. Walhalla has found that students who have access to the programs and equipment of an area career center gain a focus for their high school studies and are less likely to drop out of school.

Many career-center courses, particularly in-depth technology-oriented courses, are taken by college-preparatory as well as tech-prep students. In fact, more than one-third of Walhalla High School's college-prep students take courses at the career center.

All eighth-graders in the county visit the center before entering high school to gain an understanding of what is available. The center also offers exploratory programs to help 10th- and 11th-graders choose a career concentration.

The administrative and guidance departments of the high school and the career center collaborate to see that programs on one campus are not duplicated on the other. For example:

- The center changed its schedule to match the block schedule adopted by the high school.
- When the center introduced an early childhood education program, the high school redesigned its child development program so that the two would not overlap.
- Business Education programs are being transferred to the career center so that high school students will have access to more technology.
- Walhalla's Academy of Finance was moved to the career center so that students county-wide can participate.
- The high school's industrial technology teacher travels to the career center to teach the introductory-level course in the Ford Academy of Manufacturing Sciences (FAMS) curriculum.
- The center will begin a computer engineering academy during the 1999-2000 school year and is conducting studies for a proposed law enforcement academy.

"We are constantly evaluating the needs of students and the workplace so that we can stay up-to-date from a technical standpoint," Lanford said. For example, the center and Clemson University developed a sports medicine concentration to prepare youth to enter the fast-growing health field.

Cooperative education programs are offered in the second year of any career center program. In addition, students in the Academy of Finance complete an internship following grade 11. These internships may be in real estate, banking, business administration or finance. Students in the FAMS program complete paid internships at industries.

Although time constraints and the nine-mile distance between the high school and the career center may make it difficult, teachers from the two facilities frequently work together on projects. For example, an Applied Communication teacher from the high school and an auto service instructor from the career center developed a series of research and problem-solving assignments for auto mechanics students. The students receive grades in both auto mechanics and writing.

Connecting Rigorous Academic Concepts to Their Applications in the Workplace

Job-shadowing opportunities and workplace-related activities help students connect rigorous academic concepts to their applications in business and industry. Dozens of large and small employers have invited Walhalla students and teachers to observe in the workplace, provided technical assistance and equipment, and furnished classroom and career-day speakers.

In 1997-98, 130 students participated in at least one job-shadowing program; 361 participated in at least one service-learning project; and 798 participated in work-based learning experiences, including field trips, guest speakers, work-based enterprises and connecting activities. Students have observed professionals at a local hospital, a small business and a die-cutting industry. They have operated an agri-business on campus and have heard guest speakers who represent brokerage firms, banks, the FBI, the nuclear energy field, and many other careers.

Walhalla High School has developed two specialized courses designed to acquaint students with workplace requirements: Strategies for Success for all ninth-graders and SPECTRUM for all 10th-graders. The Strategies for Success components include Study Skills, Career Exploration, Organization and Time Management, Problem Solving, Public Speaking, Decision Making, and Finding and Using Information. SPECTRUM teaches conflict resolution, environmental awareness, service learning, interpersonal communication skills, higher-order thinking skills, career information, fine arts, and consumer finance.

In the fall of 1997, Walhalla High School was one of 12 schools invited by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership to participate in a workshop to learn more about school-to-entrepreneurship programs. Through a competitive grant process, WHS obtained funding to create and provide staff development to begin a schoolwide entrepreneurship program during the 1998-99 school year. Community involvement will be a key to the success of the program. The objective is to develop and implement high school-level entrepreneurship education initiatives in a setting that includes school-based learning, field-based entrepreneurship learning experiences, and activities that connect the school and the business community.

Rebecca Powell, who teaches the entrepreneurship class, has established a curriculum to meet the objectives. One component of the class is an Entreboard, a community-based panel that will interview each student, examine his or her portfolio or plan, and determine whether Entreboard resources will back the plan. The process will be the equivalent of applying for a loan. In addition to Entrepreneurship I and II classes, components of the program will be offered in various parts of the curriculum, including the Strategies for Success and SPECTRUM courses required of all students in grades 9 and 10. Entrepreneurship components are also offered in Consumer Science, Agriculture, Industrial Technology and Desktop Publishing.

Students and Teachers Like Block Scheduling

To meet the need for larger instructional blocks, Walhalla High School adopted an A-B block schedule consisting of four 90-minute periods per day instead of the old 50-minute periods. The new schedule enables students to take extra courses and earn additional credits. It also gives teachers more time to plan and work together and allows students to complete more projects and labs.

In considering whether to change the schedule, all teachers had the option to visit schools using block scheduling and to report their findings at faculty meetings. Following these presentations, 86 percent of the teachers voted to switch to the new schedule in the upcoming school year. The remainder of the year and the following summer were used for staff development to give teachers the skills needed to make block scheduling a success. Teachers have participated in sessions on cooperative learning, diversified learning styles, work-based applications and applied methodology.

The new schedule is assessed annually by both students and staff. From 90 to 95 percent of students and from 95 to 100 percent of teachers rank the experience as "positive." When asked if they want to return to the old 50-minute schedule, the response from students and teachers alike is an emphatic "No." Block scheduling gives teachers time to "link" lessons, develop class projects, devise workplace applications, arrange for guest speakers, and do whatever it takes to increase students' knowledge and skills.

Block scheduling has also contributed to interdisciplinary learning. Teachers have more total time and more time in common to plan and implement interdisciplinary lessons. In one example, a history teacher and an agriculture teacher had their students read about the horse-raising techniques of the Nez-Percé Indians as described by American explorers Lewis and Clark and compare the 19th century techniques to current practices.

Making Connections to Strengthen the Guidance Program

Walhalla High School works with Walhalla Middle School, Tri-County Technical College, Clemson University and the Walhalla community to offer a career development program that ensures preparation for the future through a variety of activities, both in and out of the classroom.

Efforts to connect the high school and the middle grades — led by Walhalla Middle School Principal Troy Hawkins — are particularly strong. The middle-grades career specialist ensures that students and their parents are familiar with education and career options and the high school curriculum. Each sixth-grader begins developing a career portfolio that is maintained throughout high school. The portfolio contains information on career fields as well as evidence of the student's academic achievement and extracurricular activities. Students gain information about career choices through interest inventories, class presentations, videos, guest speakers, field trips, and a career fair during which business and industry professionals talk to students about vital education and career skills.

Eighth-graders and their parents receive copies of *Career Bound*, the high school program of study booklet, which helps them make informed choices about career paths and course selection. These students also attend a presentation by Walhalla teachers, counselors and administrators on the importance of completing a challenging high school program of study. At the same meeting, they get tips for making a successful transition from the middle grades to high school.

During the second semester of grade 8, students and their parents meet with the career specialist to discuss the five career concentrations offered at the high school and the academies available to high school students at Hamilton Career Center. The career specialist forwards students' career portfolios to the high school.

In the Walhalla High School guidance system, students:

- meet with their parents and a middle-school career specialist to develop a program of study.
- complete a computerized self-assessment module in re-evaluating the plan annually.
- use computerized modules to plan course work, job or volunteer experiences, and postsecondary options. Students review the computer printouts with parents, teachers and counselors.

Hamilton Career Center provides information to help high school students choose career areas and courses. Ninth- and 10th-graders take exploratory courses at the center and meet with the career center counselor at the high school. The center also hosts a curriculum fair that helps 10th-graders learn more about careers associated with each center program. As a result of this collaboration, enrollment in the career center has soared.

Partnerships with Area Institutions

Because linkages between the high school and postsecondary institutions are so important to career and academic planning, Walhalla High School places a high priority on partnerships with area institutions. The PACE Consortium — a business and education partnership of local school districts, area employers, Tri-County Technical College and Clemson University — is the primary support for developing programs and agreements among the partners. The approaches include:

- Technical Advanced Placement (TAP) enables qualified high school students to earn technical-college credits or advanced standing in 51 courses in 26 college majors. This approach reduces duplication between high school and college courses and allows students who do well in certain high school courses to save time and money and/or to take fewer courses.

- High school and college faculty in the same disciplines meet quarterly to discuss coordination and curriculum issues. Additionally, dual-credit classes allow qualified 12th-graders to take college-level courses taught by college faculty at Hamilton Career Center. These courses count for both high school and college credit.

- Two- and four-year college representatives worked with the high school faculty to develop two structured career academies that include college courses taught at Walhalla High School. These academies provide work-based learning experiences, tuition assistance and/or scholarships.

- Technical Advanced Study enables qualified 12th-graders to schedule college-level courses at the local community college during regular school hours. College representatives also participate in College Day activities at the high school.

Using Data for School Improvement

Leaders and teachers have used data extensively in improving Walhalla High School. They collect and use student performance data, including SAT scores, results from state and national standardized tests, follow-up studies, disaggregation of course selection and program enrollment data, student attendance, grade distribution and dropout rates. Teachers participate in professional development workshops on how to interpret and use standardized test scores. The Curriculum Development Team has asked each department to examine test results and devise strategies to improve achievement. One of Walhalla's schoolwide goals is to increase standardized test scores.

Counselors identify trends in course selection and enrollment, the number of students earning Gold Seals and the number taking courses at the career center to determine the level of students' commitment to higher performance. Administrators examine grade distributions, attendance trends and school withdrawals every nine weeks. As a result, the school moves swiftly to avoid potential problems by:

- uncovering the causes of unsatisfactory student performance and finding ways to assist struggling students;
- contacting parents about student truancy; and
- counseling potential dropouts.

RESULTS OF REQUIRING HIGH STANDARDS OF ALL STUDENTS

"Increasingly, our students' eyes are being opened to the advantages of pursuing a solid academic and technical foundation as an investment in the future," Principal Hostetler said. The result has been significant increases in student performance:

- The number of 11th-graders scoring above the national average in reading, mathematics and science has increased since the school joined *High Schools That Work*.

- More students are taking the SAT exam, but Walhalla has been able to maintain its verbal and mathematics scores. In 1997, 56 percent of Walhalla's 12th-graders took the SAT test and had an average combined verbal and mathematics score of 1020, which exceeded both the state and national averages. The score is considerably higher than the average score of 865 in 1990-92, when 58 percent of students took the test. Fewer Walhalla students took the SAT in 1996 because Tri-County Technical College now administers the ASSET test to 11th-graders on the Walhalla campus each year. The ASSET test is a required placement test used by many community college systems.

Walhalla High School's SAT Test-Taking Patterns and Scores

	1990-92	1993-95	1996-98
Taking the SAT	58%	67%	57%
Average verbal score	410	406	494
Average mathematics score	455	454	498

- As a result of positive school and classroom changes, students are attending school on a regular basis and not dropping out. Between 1987-88 and 1997-98, the dropout rate declined from 3.7 percent to 2.3 percent. The attendance rate during those years increased more than a percentage point, from 96.3 percent to 97.8 percent.

- Sixty-three percent of the 1998 graduates chose to pursue education in a postsecondary setting.

Walhalla High School's Postsecondary Enrollment

	1989	1998
4-year college or university	29%	31%
2-year community or technical college	15%	32%
Total enrolled in postsecondary education	44%	63%

STATE SUPPORT FOR REPLACING THE GENERAL TRACK

South Carolina has supported Walhalla's efforts in a number of ways. New legislation and policies established statewide expectations and requirements for higher academic standards and workplace readiness for all students. The legislation, which contains many elements of *High Schools That Work*, replaced the general track by requiring students to complete either a college-preparatory program of study or an upgraded academic core and a concentration. It also called for integrated academic and vocational studies and stronger educational and career guidance systems. The legislation links high schools, technical colleges and employers in planning curriculum and assessment based on the needs of students and the economy. The state has also provided funds for staff development and materials to improve school and classroom practices.

SUPPORT FROM THE SCHOOL BOARD AND THE SUPERINTENDENT

A key factor in Walhalla's success has been the ongoing support of the board of education and district administrators, led by Superintendent Buddy Herring. Representatives of both groups attended the first *High Schools That Work* conference and have continued to provide money, materials and leadership to promote higher standards. This "buy-in" from the top has attracted the support of parents and the community and has ensured the success of school improvement efforts.

The Oconee County superintendent and school board members recognized in the late 1980s the importance of replacing the general track with an upgraded academic core and a major. With their support, all high schools in the district completed the process by 1994, two years before the date established by South Carolina for all high schools in the state.

NATIONAL HONORS

In May 1996, Walhalla High School was honored as one of 10 winners of the Seventh Annual *Business Week* Awards for Instructional Innovation. The school was also honored as a "New American High School" by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education and the U.S. Department of Education. This recognition was based on the school's success in preparing students for college and careers. It pointed to Walhalla High School as "a place where students achieve high levels of academic and technical skills."

CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

"We've come a long way since joining *High Schools That Work*," Principal Hostetler said, "but the process is never-ending. We still have a lot of work to do." The challenges include:

- **Maintaining the momentum.** A new teacher-advisor program (PACS) helps students and parents see the benefits of high-level educational and career studies.

- **Strengthening connections with the community.** Guidelines for student job-shadowing programs have been developed. They include academic prerequisites and incentives for participation.

- **Aligning the curriculum from high school through four years of postsecondary education.** The input of business and industry leaders is vital in this effort.

- **Offering staff development programs that support changes at the school.** Teachers need more information on using technology, guiding and advising students, and applying academic concepts to workplace situations.

- **Developing a single high-caliber program of study leading to any postsecondary option.** The intent is to motivate students to seek associate and baccalaureate degrees.

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